Reviewer's report

Title: Aetiology and risk factors of musculoskeletal disorders in physically active conscripts: a one-year follow-up study in the Finnish Defence Forces

Version: 1 Date: 8 March 2010

Reviewer: Owen Hill

Reviewer's report:

1. On page 3, first paragraph in the Background Section. ‘Given that 80% of young men complete their military service in Finland, the high number of MSDs affects public health.’ This sentence would be served by further detailing exactly how the percentage affects Finland’s public. Are MSDs more likely to be self-limiting, which would resolve without long term residual sequel? Or are they more likely to be chronic in nature, inhibiting normal activities of daily living?

2. On page 4, the general hypothesis; ‘low levels of physical fitness and sedentary lifestyle are associated with MSDs’ would be served by further describing the population that this hypothesis applies to in context of this study. “Among Finland’s conscript’s between July 2006-2007, those conscript’s who demonstrate low levels of physical fitness and/or maintain a sedentary lifestyle are at increased risk/rate of MSDs when compared to conscript’s who do not demonstrate low levels of physical fitness and/or maintain a sedentary lifestyle.”

3. On page 4 Methods/Subjects: The private company is a nebulous term to me. Please define this company in much greater detail. Daily activities, etc.

4. On page 7: Please explain the decision algorithm that determined how MSD severity was categorized according to the number of days of limited duty. Why were the particular cut-points chosen?

5. Page 13: What particular ICD 10 codes were assigned to the different MSD categories?

6. Page 13: Unclear what decisions were made for categorizing musculoskeletal injuries when a conscript presents with multiple injuries which occurred at the same time. For example if the individual suffered a knee, foot, and shoulder injury during one event. Please describe.

Minor Essential Revisions

1. On page 4, ‘In spite of large number’ should be written as ‘In spite of a large number.’

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.
Declaration of competing interests:
'I declare that I have no competing interests'